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## ABSTRACT

Issues related to the institutionalization of continuing professional education (CPE) within the university are considered. The components of marginality, the possible obstacles and incentives to institutionalization, and some of the support necessities are addressed, along with insights gained by a Pennsylvania State University effort to link the professions and the university. It is suggested that while CPE may have distinct characteristics, it now shares a marginal position in the university with several other kinds of activity (e.g., continuing education, evening colleges, adult education). The marginal activities are separate from but not inferior to core activities. The academic departments, and the practicing sectors of an established profession as well, have the attributes of a culture: a set of beliefs, values, and accepted norms. Role characteristics for individual professors and organizational referents that apply to departments, divisions, or colleges are addressed. Based on the Pennsylvania State University experience, it is suggested that new sources of challenge for research and analysis are found at the point of practice and in the issues that face practitioners. The application of academic expertise to issues arising in practice can be a new use of expert theoretical knowledge. In addition, the learning skills that faculty develop as scholars can be useful in non-classroom settings when applied to professional practice. Problem areas generated by continuous liaison or involvement with practitioners include role ambiguity for faculty and the fact that criteria for advancement in the academic community are often interpreted narrowly. (SW)

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INSTITUTIONALIZING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (CPE):

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF THE UNIVERSITY SITUATION

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INTRODUCTION:

Universities and colleges are faced constantly with demands that they undertake new activities. Some proposals come from within, natural outgrowths of the tentative character of knowledge today. The search for interdisciplinarity is an example. Other come from the outside, often in the form of challenges for the institution to perform better its role of public service. New demands are not likely to lessen even though resources made available to the academic sector fall behind all the normal indexes. How do institutions select those activities that are appropriate? Once the selection is made how do they install them in the life of the institution and its faculty? What effects do such introductions have?

The process by which a "marginal" activity is woven into the fabric of a university or college, or any organization for that matter, is called "institutionalization." At any time in any institution there are activities "waiting in the wings" in a marginal status. Harper and Davidson (1981) call them "residual activities" but they are more "potential" than residual. Adult education, evening college operations, continuing education, and cooperative extension work have been joined in recent times by remedial and developmental education and extended degree programs.

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Right now continuing education for the professions has been spotted in the wings. The question of how continuing education for the established professions can be and should be related to the university has contemporary significance, even urgency, for both the professors and the professionals. On both sides the idea of continuing education carries a burden of tradition that contributes complexity to both discussion and action. Often it has seemed convenient to make ad hoc provisions to the point where an incredible number of programs and pervoyors can be identified (Maxwell 1980, Houle 1980, NY Times, Sect. 12, August 30, 1981).

For the sake of completeness it is to be noted that some activities do make it to center stage and achieve complete institutionalization. Externally sponsored, project defined research, carried out in academic institutions has a much shorter history than its firm entrenchment in campus environments would seem to suggest. After World War II federal agencies needed a method of tapping the experts who returned to the academic world. Office of Naval Research "invented" for all practical purposes the project grant award to an individual professor, not to institutions. Within a very few years externally funded research became institutionalized as part of the faculty role fitting very neatly into the values and behaviors of the professoriate. Ever since the universities have been searching for an appropriate means to "recover indirect costs," a most telling phrase. But academic research was "institutionalized" in the sociological sense around the faculty role, not around an organizational unit. The point is that "institutionalization" does in fact occur rather rapidly and completely ways when conditions are right.

## OBJECTIVES:

This paper discusses the issues related to the institutionalization of continuing professional education (CPE) within the university. Without analysis in these pages it is assumed that CPE is an appropriate activity for a university. The components of marginality, the possible obstacles and incentives to institutionalization, and some of the support necessities are included in the design of the inquiry. The nature of marginality and institutionalization are considered first. The fit between the conventions of academe and the form CPE is most likely to take is taken up next. Other approaches to the issue are noted and a project design is proposed.

## INSTITUTIONALIZATION:

In everyday usage to "institutionalize" means simply to establish. That captures a large part of what the project is about; moving CPE from some peripheral status to a position within the main settings of the University. Other researchers on the topic have adopted "assimilation" (Hale 1969) "professionalization" (Farmer 1969), or integration. Institutionalization is the term that conveys a more or less permanent position for the activity in the structure of the academic department as well in the role and functions regularly performed by individual faculty members.

The essential features are confirmed by the more refined use of concept of "institutionalization" in the social sciences:

1. Those patterns of behavior that are regulated by social institutions "deal with some perennial, basic problems of society." For the professions both consumer pressure and legal reviews have confirmed the basic nature of CPE.

2. The regulation of behavior is carried out in accordance with "definite, continuous, organized patterns." Again, this is confirmed by licensing or membership control.
3. Underlying the behavior controls is a set of norms and sanctions which are universal to the society (Eisenstadt 1969). Standards of performance and good practice are common to the major professions and to new aspiring occupational groups.

Turning to a few of the formal statements: An institution is "An enduring, complex, integrated, organized behavior pattern through which social control is exerted and by means of which the fundamental social desires or needs are met" (Theodorsen 1969). Further, "Institutional interaction and exchange takes place between different people or groups who find it useful from the point of view of the implementation of their varied goals, to undertake processes of exchange..." Further, it is "more profitable to talk about the process of institutionalization and to look at it as a process of continuous crystallization of different types of norms, organizations, and frameworks which regulate the process of exchange..." Given special notice is the fact that "certain goals and situations are nonexchangeable" (Eisenstadt 1969).

Concept of institutionalization. The concept of institutionalization involves distinguishing four levels of social structure: values, norms, collectivities with more or less specialized goals, and status-roles... The four levels compose a hierarchy of normative control in the sense that the more general levels are sources of legitimation for the more specific levels, provide directional guidance for the content of the more specific levels, and are sources of corrective pressure if the more specific levels depart from them... Each level would be supported by positive and negative social sanctions, and would be the basis of legitimacy of vested interests in the system. In fact, of course, no societal value system is fully institutionalized in this sense.

Parsons in his work on The Social System observed that scientific investigation did not develop in the university until "it was institutionalized as part of the role structure of the social system..." (1951). Max Weber noted that the regularizing of social action is based on "rational belief in the absolute validity of order as an expression of ultimate values," (Wertrational). T. Clark (1968) identifies insitutionalization as the process "whereby specific cultural elements or cultural objects are adopted by actors in a social system."

Although the concept may be fairly clear to social scientists and to lay persons there is trouble with the word itself. To quote one of our professionals "Who wants to be institutionalized?" The pejorative connotation will necessitate the use of other terms that carry no negative or impersonal loadings. The main idea still holds, moving a particular set of activities into the mainstream of..." values, norms, collectives (or membership) and status-roles." T. Clark in his article on the institutionalization of innovations (1968) and Keeton (1982) out of his experience with CAEL emphasize the need for legitimacy in order to gain acceptance in the community. A measure of support in the form of resources must be present. Finally, the indentity or name of the activity must be recognizable. This latter point is of special significance to this project. Continuing professional education (CPE) as a particular kind of activity is not seen by academics as a discrete endeavor. "What" we are seeking to institutionalize is not self evident and must be explained to participants.

#### CONTEXT:

The Continuing Professional Education Development Project at The

Pennsylvania State University aided by Kellogg Foundation funds offers an approach to the question of how professions and the university can be linked based on three main ideas. The first premise is that collaboration between the organized professions and the academic world will be more effective than unilateral action. The Project operates in a consensual mode which requires joint action at every stage. The second premise is that the conditions of practice are the best source of guidance for educational programs. This notion is operationalized by the Practice Audit Model (see Appendix A). The third premise recognizes the necessity of establishing within both the University and the profession a permanent but not inflexible organizational locus for the CPE activity. It is the details of this third premise, institutionalization of the approach, that are addressed in this paper. Information on the Practice Audit Model and further consideration of the collaboration idea is available from the Project office (Appendix A).

In its full scope this project will deal with the institutionalization of CPE in the professional association as well as in the University. Issues arise, too, about what the completely institutionalized situation might look like and how it can be attained. For discussion here only the University aspect will be considered. The concern is with an exploration of what institutionalization means and the obstacles that hamper achievement. The "how" of the matter, identifying policies and procedures that will give the most effective modes of support to CPE, is still ahead.

From its inception this project included a component emphasizing the need for certain intra-university development to address the full range of possibilities in the CPE concept. Indeed, the earliest drafts

placed this topic in a primary position and suggested that most of the efforts should go toward "institutionalizing" the important activity within the University. An even earlier report by the Committee on Continuing Professional and Occupational Education (August 1977) cited the need for action in the colleges and departments. In the final version of the project proposal the process is the substance of the second objective; "To strengthen the University's long term capacity to develop and implement continuing professional education programs at the college, department, and academic support levels of the University."

#### NATURE OF CPE

The experience of the Kellogg-sponsored project at Penn State over the past eighteen months has generated a scenario for collaboration between professional associations representing mature practitioners and the University represented by departments and colleges with an interest in particular professions. Accounting, architecture, clinical diabetics, clinical psychology, nursing, and medicine are the subject professions and the analogs in the departmental structure of the University are self-evident.

Continuing professional education (CPE) when carried out in the mode developed by this Project appears to generate these activities:

- ° Continuous liaison between the University and the profession. This means a commitment of time and effort by a university department or by individual faculty. In the profession it means commitment by a CE office or committee to communication with the University.
- ° A perspective on the generic nature of practice, not just theory, must be acquired by academic participants. The common elements of

practice are continuously reexamined and evaluated by assessment center techniques. This assessment identifies practitioners' needs or shortcomings.

- ° Learning experiences to meet these needs in appropriate ways are jointly developed by faculty and practitioners. There is a substantial investment time and effort in the development of these learning experiences. These investments are separate from delivery charges which are the usual source of revenue for continuing education.

- ° The conditions of professional practice become an important stimulus for research, writing, and analysis by faculty who are committed to CPE. For practitioners and their associations the full resources of the University become available and open a possibility of dealing more deeply with professional issues like ethics, interprofessional cooperation, and coordinated community services.

Translating these attributes into the terms of the academic world, the outcome is one in which faculty will do much of what they want to do and are trained to do, research, publish, teach, learn, and otherwise interact, but with an orientation toward practice rather than the pure paradigms of the discipline or field of study.

One of the major operational challenges of this research effort is to somehow convey to respondents a reasonably complete picture of what CPE might be. Since it does not now exist in many minds as an entity and because even the rudiments of collaboration are missing from most continuing education, that task is a formidable one.

# MARGINALITY: A PRECONDITION TO INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Quite obviously not all activities in any organization or society are institutionalized. Many operate on a transitory basis with values of their own and remain at some distance from the center of the enterprise. This represents a marginal status.

While Continuing Professional Education (CPE) may have distinct characteristics it now shares a marginal position in the university with several other kinds of activity. Continuing education, evening colleges, adult education, extension education and quite a few other activities have been described as "marginal" to some academic "core" (Hale 1969, B. Clark 1958, Porter 1970, Patton 1975, Knowles 1960).

Marginality is one of those generally useful concepts like equilibrium, dissonance, or differentiation that enhances the power of description and understanding. It is, of course, an abstraction that may or may not be a perfect analog to reality. The sociological and anthropological use of the term may be helpful because the boundary idea is developed more fully in those applications. A given culture has a periphery where its mores, customs, and values fade and the culture traits of neighboring societies are visible. Sometimes these blend and at other times they are in conflict with those of the main body (Theodorsen 1969). Park (1928) made the condition vivid by presenting the dilemma of the "marginal man" who makes his existence where those boundaries meet. Not fully committed to the values and behaviors of either he is beset by decisions that have a high potential for conflict. Anyone who has worked with an evening school program or extension efforts knows the feeling.

Marginality has consequences for an organizational unit and its operations. In education the origins of marginality lie more in simple tradition than with a strategy or intention to exclude. Then too, the separations between the core and the margin are less hierarchial and more sectoral in education than in other fields. Continuing education, evening colleges, and extended degrees have what Foster calls "high practical success but low acceptance," are separate but not equal." They are separate from but not inferior to core activities.

Burton Clark (1958) in a classic analysis has described the difficulties of a marginal academic activity. There are basic problems of identity because of the need to respond to external factors, often quite variable, rather than to an intrinsic sense of purpose. There is insecurity and "to win permanent security...the organization needs to achieve equality with programs or units intrinsically recognized as centrally important." There are also questions of integrity because activities are shaped to the client needs rather than to consistent behaviors of the parent organization. Porter (1970) examined attitudes toward a marginal enterprise among Syracuse faculty and found not opposition but indifference and unawareness, typical of marginality. Hale (1969) dealt with department chairmen to ascertain the degree of "assimilation" of continuing education into their departments. Marginality was lower among chairmen who had experience with the activity. In examining the extended degree program in an "elite institution" Patton (1975) found "less direct opposition than expected but rather an absence of enthusiasm for participation."

For the marginal activity one obvious course of action is to make "virtue of necessity" by creating self-contained satellite operation.

This is in fact what successful evening colleges and continuing education programs have usually done. With CPE, however, the problem is to bring a marginal state into greater congruence, not necessarily correspondence, with the core functions of the University. However, if CPE cannot be positioned within the activity, value, and attitudinal structure of faculty members and departments then it may prove necessary to create another type of satellite unit for the University.

#### REFERENTS OF THE ACADEMIC CORE:

The academic departments, and the practicing sectors of an established profession as well, have the attributes of a culture. They are characterized by a closely woven network of beliefs, values, and accepted norms. These define and justify, they "explain" the behaviors of that profession which are regularized, rationalized, and bounded.

It is possible to set several of the propositions that describe the cultural core for university faculty. Substantiation can be found in the work of Shils ( ), Light (1974), Merton ( ), Parsons (1970), and Hagstrom ( ), to cite only a few who have attempted to unravel the academic culture. These are "role referents" or expected behaviors for individuals that carry favorable values. The recent works of Bess (1982) and Braxton (1980) have proved especially useful in operationalizing these ideas for survey items.

These referents or descriptors are characteristic of the academic world and become operating assumptions for this study.

- ° There is a core of preferred activities and work conditions, of valued behaviors, in the academic profession.

- ° By preparation and position faculty interests are specialized around a discipline or field of study. This cultivated expertise is rooted in "cognitive rationality" rather than in practical experience. Expertise gives legitimacy to research, teaching at all levels, and to particular kinds of consulting and public service. This expertise is seen as highly individual and personal.
- ° Autonomous use of time and personal energy is an important and valued attribute of the academic role. Nevertheless work time is divided into scheduled events like classes or administration and unscheduled time or professional time which the individual has a "disposable resource," to use the economic analogy. This circumstance presents a rather "open" work situation.
- ° "normal" activities for faculty include a large component of communication in a variety of forms. Reading and interacting with colleagues to keep current in the field. Diffusion and communication of one's work through the publication of articles and books, presentation of papers at meetings, and liaison with colleagues elsewhere in the field are all expected along with teaching in various forms.
- ° The most legitimate of activity is that which extends the nature and utility of knowledge. Inquiry by formal research, efforts to verify and organize knowledge, and even the evaluation of its applications are seen as part of the academic role and the departmental emphasis as well.

Just as there are referent role characteristics for the individual professors so there are organizational referents that apply to departments, divisions, or colleges.

#### °Workload Definitions

- 1) workload responsibilities are clearly defined to distinguish "scheduled time" committed to teaching or institutional projects and "professional time" which is open to individual choice based, of course, on professional judgments of what is important.
- 2) Departments staffing levels are adequate to insure "professional" for individuals on an equal basis.
- 3) Performance expectations are consistent with workload levels.

#### °Support

- 1) Departments take an "enabling role by providing various kinds of support. Secretarial and office service is one basic type of support.
- 2) Travel funds for attendance of meetings is a valued kind of support.
- 3) Leaves and special study options are highly valued.
- 4) Technical support and the availability of teaching assistants as well as research assistants is valued highly.

#### °Work Climate

- 1) The nature and amount of stimulus and intellectual challenge is important.
- 2) The quality of interpersonal associations arising from collegial contacts and relationships with students, particularly, graduate students, is a valued component of the work situation.

- 3) Opportunities for extramural association and exchange within the discipline or profession is a valued component.

#### °Maintaining Legitimacy

- 1) Communication of mission, direction, and priorities by the departmental leadership is expected.
- 2) Representation on behalf of group and individual interests is carried by the department.
- 3) Even handed, fair, and participatory administration is viewed as feasible and desirable.

#### CPE AND THE ACADEMIC CONTEXT

By comparing the features of academic roles and organizational characteristics with what we have been able to learn about continuing professional education through the "profession teams" on the Penn State project some aspects of CPE marginality become clear. What might be the effects of continuous liaison between the professors and the professionals? of a focus on practice rather than theory?

On the plus side:

- new sources of challenge for research and analysis, many with strong intellectual and theoretical components, are found at the point of practice and in the issues that face practitioners. That intellectual component is likely to be much more pronounced in the established professions than in narrow occupational settings.
- for academics the association with professional practitioners can open new lines of recognition, prestige, and new avenues of publication and presentation.

- in one sense the application of academic expertise to the issues arising at the point of practice rather than in the stages of professional preparation can be interpreted as a new use of expert theoretical knowledge.
- the learning skills faculty develop as scholars find new forms of application other than classroom settings and serve an entirely different clientele, professionals of equal but different intellectual stature.

The problem areas generated for academics by continuous liaison and involvement with practitioners can also be discerned.

- The criteria for advancement in the academic community, principally publication in combination with selected other factors (Tuckman 1979), are often interpreted narrowly by peer groups.
- The autonomy over with styles and interests as well as the direct authority over work situations, e.g., class and lab sessions, will be markedly reduced in collaborative settings.
- there is a predisposition in academic circles toward theory and away from practice. This should have to be addressed directly by any policy plan.
- an additional dimension of role ambiguity for faculty is introduced into a circumstance that is already conflicted by serious role segmentation, e.g., teachers-researchers.
- working in learning situations that are unconventional with clients who are "non-traditional" raises a whole range of requirements of a pedagogical nature.

Even with these potential points of friction an association between academics and practitioners in the formal professions holds out more promise that catch as catch can, short cycle, standard content programs of the kind most often developed in the early stages of continuing education or extension programs.

#### OTHER VIEWS OF THE ISSUE

The position developed here posits a two-stage process, research to find out where the frictions and openings are in the path of institutionalization, and then a consideration of the combination of policy alternatives that will address them; "what" and "how" are separated. So also is "where" left open. The matter of whether the faculty role should be the target of change strategies or the organizational unit, department or college.

The marginal position occupied by important types of ancillary activity is not unstudied. Others have addressed our central issue on behalf of continuing education, evening schools, profession updating, adult education, and other ancillary but substantial programs.

Lowenthal (1981) compared mandatory and voluntary approaches to continuing professional educators and recommended a "cybinnetic model" keyed to self assessment. The university role is one of service to the profession in ways that are defined by practitioners groups alone. The idea of the university as a service agency, a public service agency in this case, is elaborated by Harper and Davidson (1981). They propose a realignment of priorities among the great triumvirate of university purposes, research, teaching and service, to give more weight, attention, and support to service. Of particular concern to them is service to the health professions. They rightly pick up on the imperfect

definition of service in the faculty role complex and recommend a clearer rationale for service. A key point of this proposal is exposure of faculty to the practice by means of participation, "practice what they teach" is the phrase. In both these approaches the full potential of the university is scarcely touched. The notion of service is almost one of subservience. B. Clark (1958) makes the point that intrinsic values of the academic world must be linked into extrinsic demands to give mutual advantages.

Votruba and his associates at Illinois have carefully analyzed and developed another approach for institutionalizing "outreach" activities. Hanna (1981), Pollicita (1981), and Votruba (1978, 1979, 1981) have presented various aspects of the effort in contemporary literature. To oversimplify for the sake of brevity, they act from the premise that continuing education and similar outreach efforts are academically legitimate and need only to be properly incorporated in the reward structure. By improving the ways in which faculty describe their activities and by emphasizing the analogies of conventional academic reporting they bring full consideration for persons whose dossiers are before the committees on promotion and tenure. A general policy statement from the vice chancellor's office gives public notice of legitimacy for outreach activity. Thus, Votruba moves to stretch the system at a crucial point, the reward structure, in order to press for acceptance of new faculty role components. It's an interesting and cleverly operationalized view.

Rutgers University decentralized continuing education activities to the college level several years ago. Otte (1980) investigated faculty reactions to find that, generally, favorable attitudes toward continuing

education predominated. At the same time certain areas, community services for one, were searching for an organizational vehicle to sustain interdisciplinary services.

The project underway at Penn State differs in a number of ways from previous approaches. First, continuing professional education is treated as a discrete phenomenon. Second, collaboration on equal terms in all stages is a primary commitment. Third, even as the pilot run is being made there is an intention of establishing the relationships on a more permanent basis so the recycling effects can go forward without interruption.

The questions that attend this approach at this time are:

- \*How much contact have faculty had with CE in any form? with practitioners? Hale (1969) and others have demonstrated that receptivity to CE grows with experience.
- \*How marginal to the academic enterprise is CPE perceived to be by faculty?
- \*What policies or procedures are appropriate in the eyes of faculty and in the vein of administrators to support participation in CPE?
- \*Are measures that attempt to modify individual faculty roles likely to be effective in the institutionalization of CPE? or are adjustments in the organizational units, departments and colleges, necessary?

#### DESIGN

Three groups of subjects are involved in the study, a ten percent random sample of the university teaching faculty, faculty who are already working with "profession teams" on the Kellogg project, and academic administrators, deans and department heads, whose units have natural ties with the six professions.

Interview schedules based on the same framework as the survey instrument will be used with the latter two groups. The faculty survey is the point of focus here.

A random sample, 255 names, has been drawn from professional ranks outside the medical school. A pretest of 25 subjects will be administered. A smaller "reaction group", 15, at another institution as reviewed the document and offered comments.

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